with cow comfort, economics

erature on resting response to stocking density between 100% and 120%. However, the bottom line conclusion is that, beyond 120% stall stocking density, all studies show a reduction in the cows’ lying time. It can be concluded that optimal profit per stall and cow well-being are both achievable under ideal management conditions. The model of De Vries et al. (2016) will help identify the economically optimum stocking density for any specific set of on-farm circumstances. However, the dairy industry must recognize that, for some farms, a trade-off will occur between economics and well-being. That is a critical dilemma the industry must confront.

The Bottom Line
The economic impact of overcrowding encompasses depressed health, reproduction and milk yield. Stocking stalls and feed bunk space at approximately 120% appears to be a critical point beyond which a trade-off between economics and well-being becomes increasingly likely. A recently published model allows users to assess optimal stall stocking density under varying economic conditions, and readers are encouraged to access it online from the Journal of Dairy Science.

References
*Rick Grant is president of the William H. Miner Agricultural Research Institute in Chazy, N.Y.